



Alaska Syndromic Surveillance for COVID-Like Illness (CLI)

Weeks 52– 17: Dec 17– May 2, 2021

Updated weekly on Wednesdays – last updated May 5, 2021

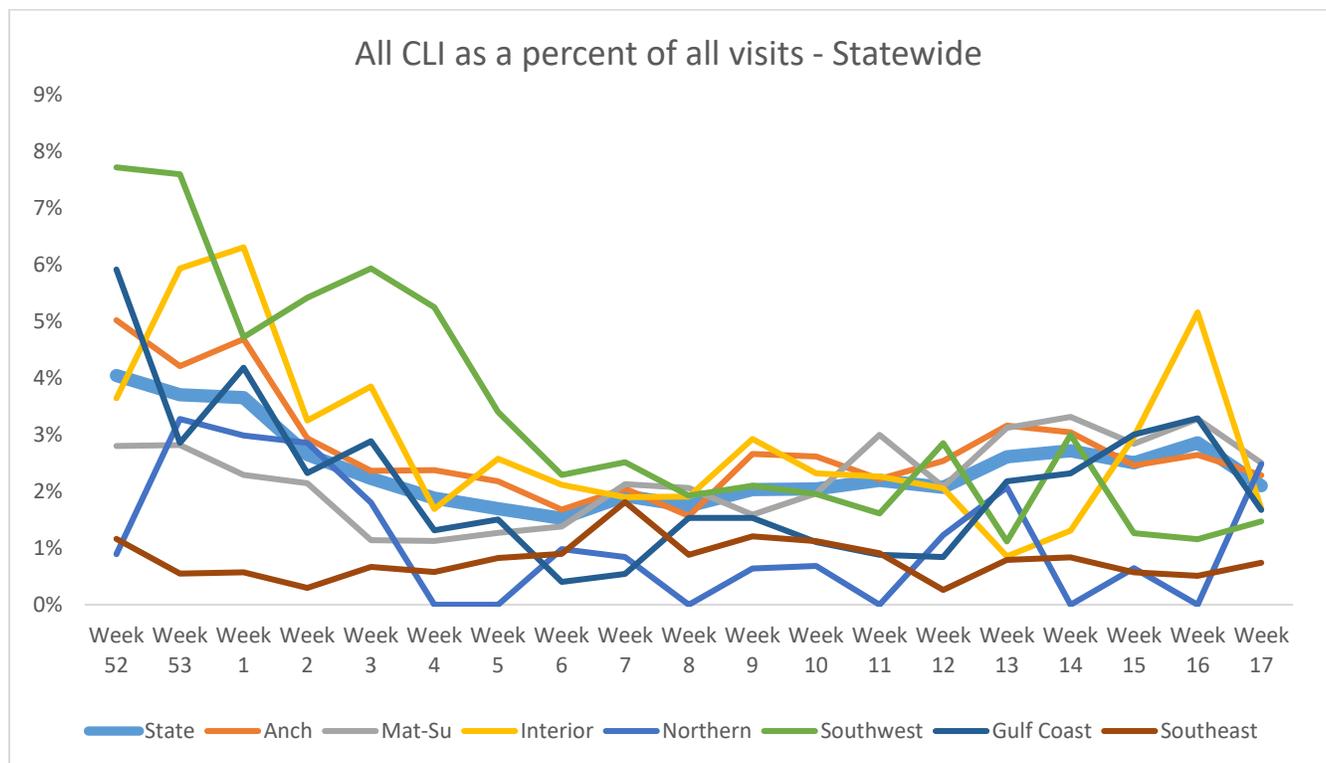
Summary:

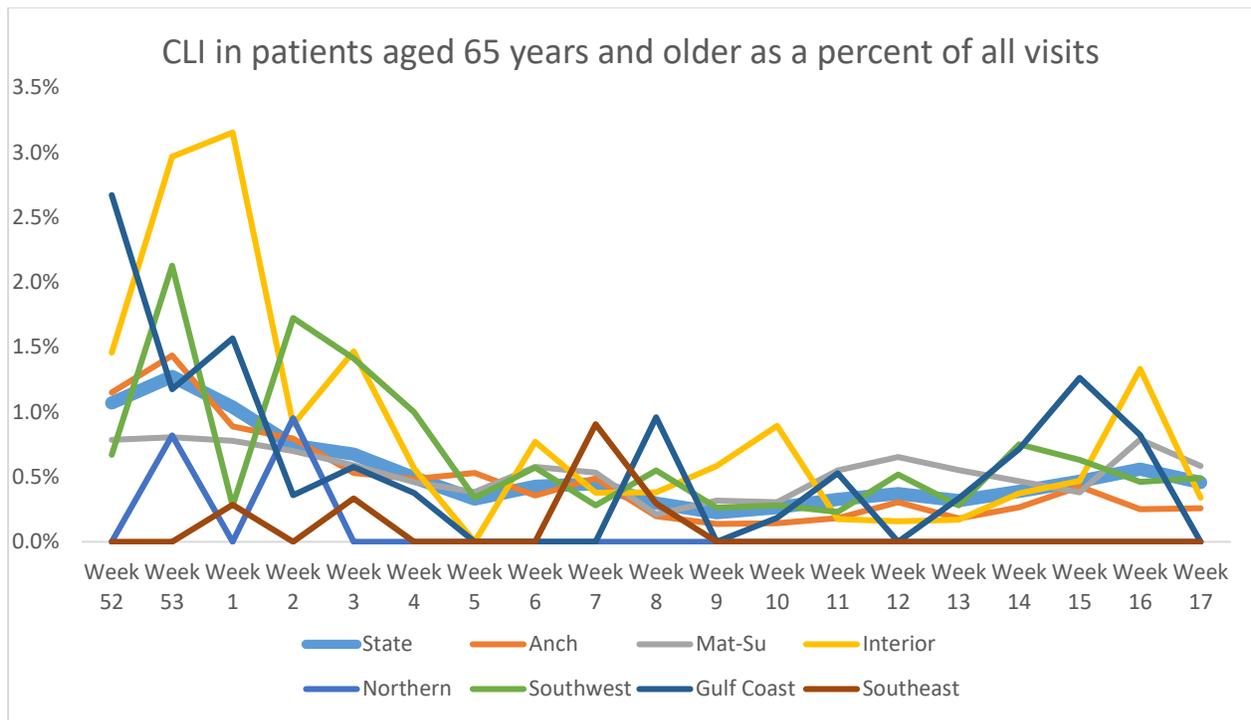
These data show people presenting to Alaska emergency departments for illness compatible with COVID-19. Data are produced using text searches of chief complaints and diagnosis codes that suggest COVID-like illness (CLI). CLI looks for patients with fever or chills, and a respiratory symptom like cough, difficulty breathing, or shortness of breath. Visits are removed for patients who have a diagnosis code for a different pathogen, such as influenza, respiratory syncytial virus, or *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. Data are reported by week, using the [week number](#).

Syndromic data comes with a large measure of uncertainty. **These are NOT confirmed cases of COVID-19.** Many of these individuals do not have COVID-19, and many actual cases of COVID-19 do not seek emergency department care.

Additionally, the following **limitations** should be considered when analyzing these data:

- Not all Alaska emergency departments participate in syndromic surveillance. Furthermore, some hospitals have elected to set up a separate area in their hospital to triage and treat patients with respiratory infection, which may prevent those visits from appearing in these data.
- Many or most COVID-19 patients do not require a hospital level of care, and many will not visit an emergency department for this illness.
- Patient region was assigned based on the zipcode of the patients' home address. This doesn't necessarily match where they were seen, or where they might have been exposed.

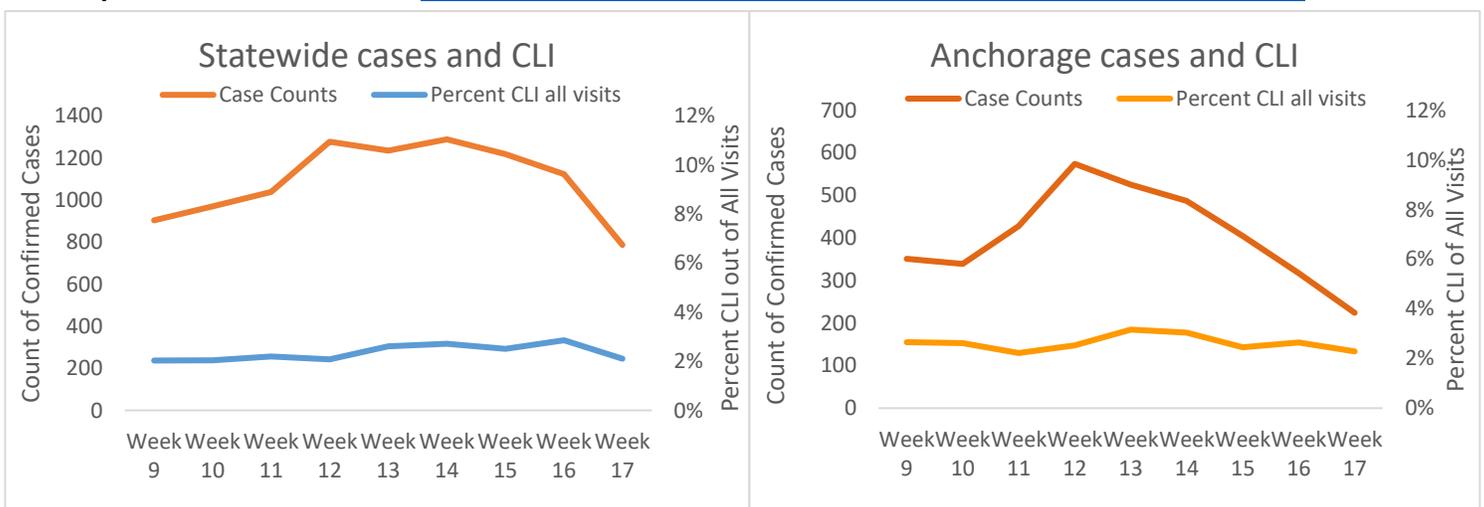


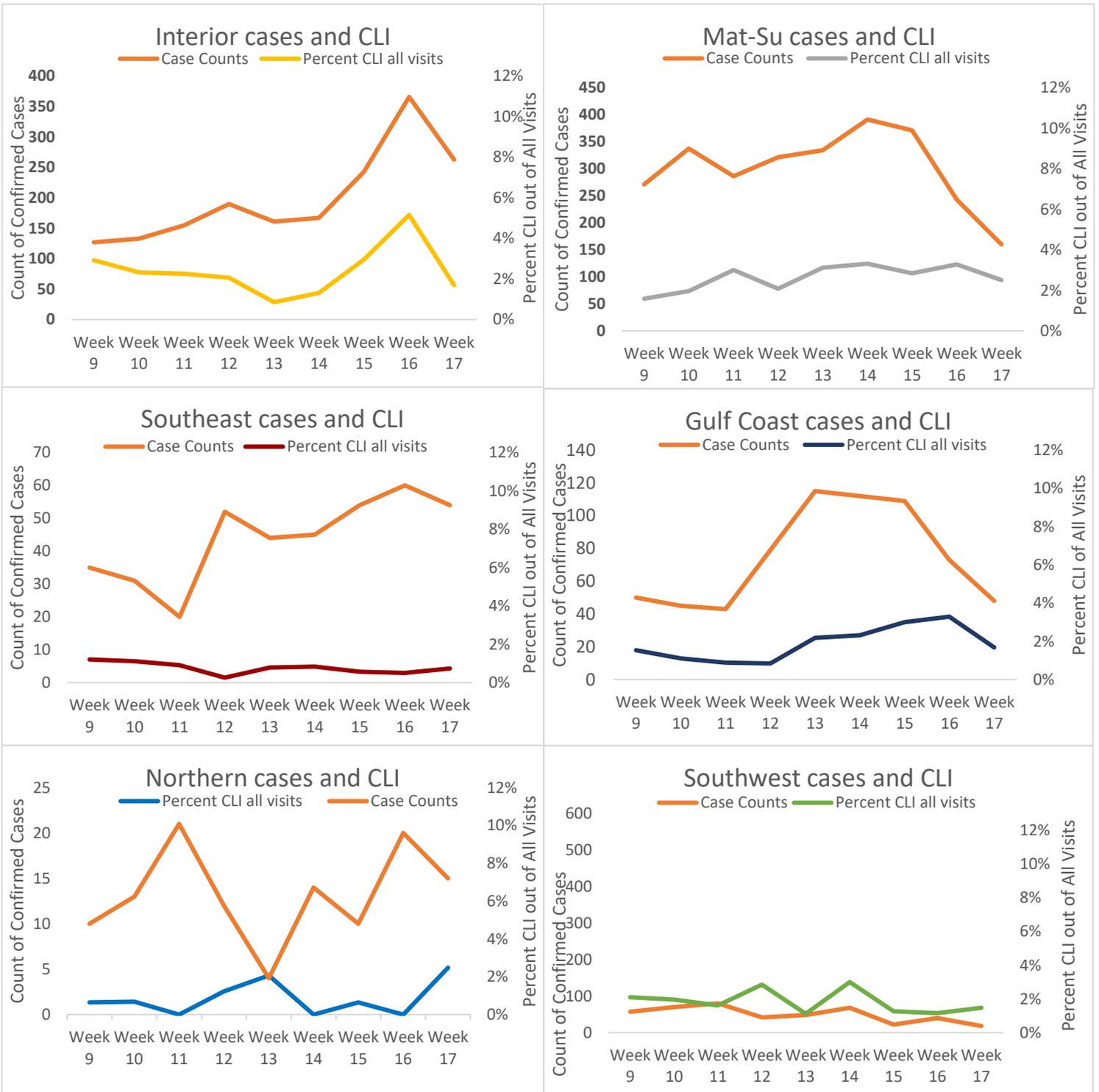


Interpretation:

- The proportion of ED visits with CLI peaked in week 12 statewide at ~9% in week 47.
- CLI in patients aged 65 and older peaked at 3% in week 49.
- During the early phases of the pandemic, health-seeking behavior changed significantly, and ED utilization was substantially lower than is typical. ED use is now largely back to normal, although it remains lower than previous years.
- CLI activity has risen slightly in statewide data, and in certain regions- particularly the Interior.

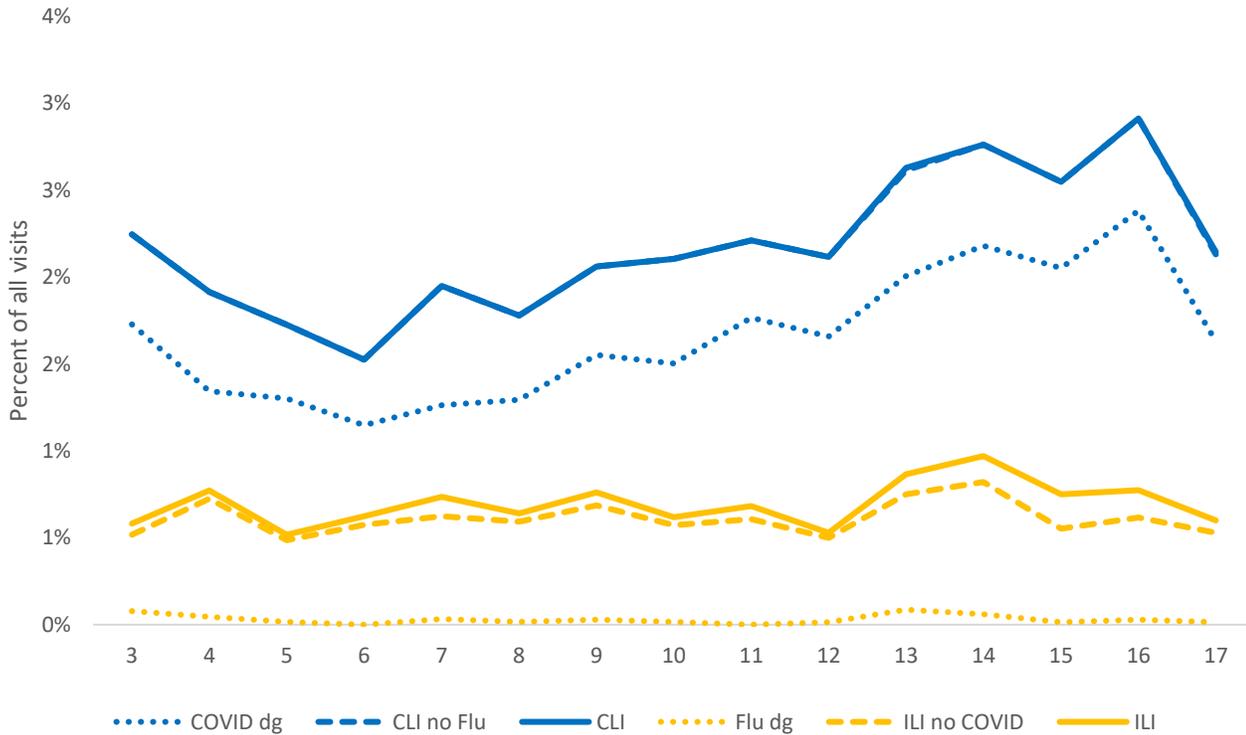
Comparison of CLI data with [counts of laboratory-confirmed resident cases found on dashboard](#):





COVID and Influenza

The below graph presents syndromic surveillance data for both possible COVID cases and possible influenza cases. For both illnesses, three tiers are presented: that pathogen as specified by ICD-10 or SNOMED code (COVID dg and Flu dg); that illness by code or keyword, with the other pathogen removed (CLI no flu and ILI no COVID); and that illness by code or keyword without removing the other pathogen (CLI and ILI). This graph is intended to help clinicians understand the frequency of certain symptom sets, the frequency of diagnosis of these two viruses, and the general state of respiratory viral illness in Alaska as 'flu season' continues with the new impact of COVID. Influenza cases continue to be reported in small numbers each week.



Resources

- More information about syndromic surveillance in Alaska is available [here](#).
- National syndromic surveillance data for CLI are [here](#).
- Alaska data for Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) are presented in weekly Flu Snapshots available [here](#).